

April 21, 2006

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
BUREAU OF HIGHWAY DESIGN**

CONFERENCE REPORT

PROJECT: Alstead
14540M

DATE OF CONFERENCE: April 4, 2006

LOCATION OF CONFERENCE: Vilas Gymnasium, Alstead, NH

ATTENDED BY:

R. Landry	V. Chase	R. Aubrey	M. Dugas
J. Evans	D. Graham	C. Forrest	J. Sikora (FHWA)
M. Hazlett			

Also see attached attendees lists

SUBJECT: Restoration of NH Routes 123 and 123A and associated side roads from the flood damage suffered during October 2005.

NOTES ON CONFERENCE:

R. Landry introduced the NHDOT attendees, Collis Adams (NHDES), Jamie Sikora (FHWA), and State Representative Daniel Eaton. He briefly gave an overview of the project intent and background and some of the ongoing information about coordination with other agencies that the NHDOT is involved with for the post flood efforts. This included acknowledging the effort to make NH Route 123 passable before the 2005-2006 winter. He clarified that the work, done quickly and under adverse conditions, was commendable but was intended as an interim repair without observing many of our normal construction requirements such as compaction of embankments, materials below the pavement, the pavement itself, and achieving sufficient cover over pipes, building appropriate drainage structures (headwalls and drainage basins), installing underdrain, etc. This may lead to some rework of the repaired road. Then V. Chase spoke regarding the Right of Way process. In

conjunction with R. Landry, she covered the process for the re-establishment of the original right of way where prescriptive right of way had been in effect.

It was explained that a portion of Route 123 from NH Route 123A to NH Route 12A was established with a defined right of way that was secured in the 1950's. The remainder was covered by prescriptive right of way allowing between 10 to 15 feet beyond the edge of pavement as the recognized right of way. As the flood has destroyed the road in many locations and is not available as a reference for the right of way, the Commissioner will re-establish the right of way as allowed by statute. Each property owner adjacent to NH Route 123 from NH Route 12A east to Lake Warren will receive a plan of their frontage that showed the road and the re-established right of way for their review and comment. It was stressed by both Bob and Victoria that this would be with the help of the property owners to verify that the lines actually made sense based on physical evidence, documentation, abutters' recollections, etc. M. Dugas then reviewed the project post-flood conditions and the proposed conceptual improvements. Then J. Evans did a brief environmental statement generally outlining the policies and procedures applicable to the project. A summary of the presentation and the attendees' comments follows:

The project begins on NH Route 123 approximately 750' west of the intersection with NH Route 123A and continues easterly approximately 4.0 miles to approximately 350' east of Camp Brook Road. The intent is to provide two 11' lanes with 4' shoulders, the majority of the road being on the existing alignment with areas of significant relocations at the intersection with Cobb Hill Road and at the intersection at NH Route 12A and more modest realignments at the Fuller farm and in the vicinity of the Sweeney property. Four separate work efforts within the general project limits were separately identified and presented as well.

The temporary bridge (east of the town's highway department garage) that replaces a structural plate arch pipe is to be removed this year and replaced by a reinforced concrete box culvert. To do so will require closure of the NH Route 123 at the brook crossing. This work will occur while school is not in session to avoid detouring school buses over Camp Brook Road. Also it is hoped to replace a 6-foot diameter pipe further east that would require road closure as well, although that may be part of the overall project advertising during late fall of 2006. Some concern was raised as to how many times the road might need closure for construction but it was noted that the road could only undergo closure at a time to avoid isolation of homes between the closures. It was decided to sign NH 10 and NH 123A as the formal detour. Several attendees commented that the local populace would know which local routes could be utilized, but it would not be appropriate to sign these local roads as alternate routes as they would not be appropriate for a sustained use by the general public. The permanent replacement of the temporary bridge would ultimately include a shift of the road toward the south to accommodate the addition of shoulder width without impacting properties on the north side. Mr. Knight inquired if the road was moving toward his property on the eastern

end of this work, uphill of the temporary bridge. He also noted that he had two errant vehicles in the last year go onto his property even though it is on the inside of the curve. Although there is some slope work on the parcel, and it is recognized that sight distance is not what would be desired, there is not a need to acquire this property at this time.

The work at the corner in the vicinity of Fuller's farm is proposed to slightly flatten a horizontal curve that is sharper for the posted speed than AASHTO advises, particularly in the face of reported run off the road accidents. Mr. Fuller commented that the existing curve was adequate for 35 mph if drivers would obey the posted speed limit. As with the comment by Mr. Hancock, R. Landry responded that there was little from an engineering stance that could be done to control speed but aggressive enforcement could help reduce the problem substantially. That was reinforced by comments from a past law enforcement officer and a previous Alstead chief of police attending the meeting. In addition, Mr. Fuller noted that there was an obvious crack that had developed in the pavement in the vicinity of the curve near the yellow pavement striping, where a significant amount of the fill below the subbase of the former road had washed out in the flooding and had been replaced as part of the temporary repairs. In a follow-up meeting with town officials and the Fuller's, the curve will only be flattened to allow the widening of the roadway to the south side of the existing roadway. The addition of the shoulders requires a 3-foot shift in the centerline of the roadway.

The work at Cobb Hill Road would shift NH Route 123 northerly from the previous location and southerly from the current detour location to avoid reproducing the substandard sight distance situation formerly in the northeastern quadrant. This also minimizes the reconstruction of the eroded slope along the south side of NH Route 123. It would mean the purchase of the house and barn on the J&W Realty property (parcel 33). The right of way process has begun with the owner. This would allow discontinuance of the detour that is substandard horizontally and vertically. Mr. Hancock, who resides on the parcel at the western end of the detour near Cobb Hill Road, brought up a concern that improving the area would result in excessive speed by drivers as he stated that there was already a speeding issue with the less than desirable pre-existing conditions. J. McCarty (selectman) stated that Cooper Hill Road is not being considered for reconnection to NH Route 123 at least for the next few decades. He sees some type of flood control structure there rather than a bridge.

Partially as a result of the Cooper Hill Road closure, diverting traffic to the intersection of NH Route 12A, this intersection would be both raised in grade and relocated in horizontal alignment to form more of a 90° angle versus the existing 60° angle and the grade of NH Route 123 raised approximately 8' to provide a platform prior to NH Route 123 versus the existing steep down grade leading directly to NH Route 123. Mr. Crump, who lives immediately east of the NH 12A intersection, was concerned that he would be looking at an 8-foot embankment from his house. It was pointed out that the 8-foot of raise

in grade would only be in the immediate vicinity of the intersection and would be matched to the existing roadway grade just west of the bridge over Warren Brook, near his home.

The work in the vicinity of the Sweeney property is to move the road away from Warren Brook, where it washed the road away leaving a sloping rock surface that would be very difficult and expensive to reconstruct the road in its previous location. This would require moving the alignment of NH Route 123 south into the existing slope. After the meeting, Mr. Sweeney, in conversation with V. Chase and myself, asked about the specifics of the design and impact to the properties. He asked whether the access for passage of a tractor to the “back acreage” at the top of the cut would be accommodated and whether the property owner would be responsible for any preliminary work, such as clearing the slope of trees. He was told that a 14-foot access road suitable for a tractor had been shown on the plans and that the Department would arrange for all work necessary for the project construction, including removal of trees from the affected slope. He was also informed if, per his own desire, he wanted the hillside cleared in advance of the construction, that would be acceptable to the Department. M. Saxton (selectmen) expressed concern that the expansive stone slope would be unattractive and out of character for the town. He asked if the slope could be vegetated. R. Landry responded that the slope would at least be treated with humus and grass seed and possibly some other vegetation.

Comments about the remainder of the work included the following:

- Mr. Breshears, owner of the greenhouses, asked when the work would occur, as his business is very dependent upon the season, ranging from April through November, with the prime portion of his year being spring through early summer. R. Landry responded that any road closures would only be allowed during the period that school is out that is basically mid to late June until late August. Otherwise people might take somewhat longer to get to his business due to alternating one-way traffic but they would still be able to get there.
- Ms. Wilson expressed concern with the degree of impacts on her property. She has put about \$70,000 into restoring the property as her husband, who is serving in Iraq, was born in that house, and she feels that any additional impact from the road construction would be too much. The Department understands her concerns and will look to minimize impacts to the property.
- Concern was expressed how the road could be widened in the vicinity of Mill Hollow where the homes are very close to both sides of the road, or in the downtown area. M. Dugas responded that the project is intended to begin in the vicinity of Murphy Road, before the downtown area. In Mill Hollow the width of the road may need to be narrowed to avoid unacceptable impacts to the properties.

Also, as the Department is proposing a supplementary bypass pipe either upstream or downstream of the Mill Hollow dam, it was suggested that it be priority work. In the same vein, concern was raised as to why the Department was not designing its drainage and bridge structures for an event equivalent to the flood event (Q500). R. Landry explained that Department policy in general is to design drainage structures for 50-year events and for bridges to additionally be analyzed for the 100-year event plus 1 foot of freeboard. The October 2005 flood, however, was in the magnitude of a 500-year event, which is well outside of any normal design parameters. Plus the fact that without the structural plate pipe arch at Cooper Hill Road there is not a breach potential of the same magnitude remaining. In general, there is a point where the probability of the event must be balanced with the economics or practicality of such a design. Even though the design will not accommodate a 500-year event there will be a significant improvement over the pre-flood condition, which should favorably impact the results of future events.

The question was raised as to the specifics of the restoration of the brook and river, associated banks, and what steps needed to be done to allow affected property owners to restore eroded sections of their parcels near or adjacent to the brook or river. R. Landry responded that the Department of Transportation would do such work as was necessary to restore the roadways adjacent to the river and brook. The other restoration efforts will be within the scope of the NHDES who is working in conjunction with the Cold River Advisory Council. At that point Collis Adams of NHDES Wetlands Bureau responded by stating that the necessary funding was being pursued by NH's congressional delegation and that an integrated and coordinated restoration effort was needed to avoid a piecemeal approach to the work that may be counterproductive to the overall restorative goals. Approximately \$50,000 is necessary to engage the appropriate professionals to plan the restoration and then millions of dollars will be necessary for the restoration effort throughout the watershed. The study may be able to be undertaken later this year with work perhaps beginning the following year or the next. The timeframes given were received with an expressed attitude that the process would take too long and that those affected have already waited long enough. No resolution was reached.

Submitted by:

Michael D. Hazlett, PE

MDH/mdh

NOTED BY: R. Landry_____ M. DugasMJD

cc: Attendees

J. Moore	C. Green	W. Hauser	M. Richardson
J. McCarty, Alstead Chairman of the SelectBoard		D. Eaton, NH Representative	

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